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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LAGOS 000505

SIPDIS

CAIRO FOR POL -- MAXSTADT

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/06/2013

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [ASEC](#) [KDEM](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: HARRY'S MURDER FLAMES PORT HARCOURT  
TENSIONS

REF: A. ABUJA 00448

[B](#). ABUJA 00449

Classified By: CONSUL GENERAL ROBYN HINSON-JONES. REASON: 1.5 (B & D)

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[1](#). (U) SUMMARY. Marshall Harry's death on March 5 is the latest in a series of murders regarded by southern Nigerians as political assassinations. His death has raised tensions in the Rivers State capital of Port Harcourt, where the leading opposition presidential candidate plans to hold a rally tomorrow, March 8. Harry's death is being interpreted in the South as a warning to politicians that some of them will try to attain and hold on to power at all costs. (See also septel "WHO WAS MARSHALL HARRY?") END SUMMARY.

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ANPP RALLY MOVES FORWARD  
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[2](#). (C) ANPP's rally for presidential candidate Muhammadu Buhari, organized by Marshall Harry just prior to his death, is still scheduled to take place at the Port Harcourt Liberation Stadium tomorrow, March 8. Deputy Police Commissioner for Rivers State B.A. Hassan told police March 7 that the police are "prepared for a potential backlash," but he does not anticipate there will be a disturbance. He expressed confidence in the ability of his "men on the ground to contain any problems" and said they will "meet with the political heads to reach an understanding" that the event should go peacefully. He said he expects the leaders will in turn talk to their youth supporters to ensure that no violence will break out among them.

[3](#). (C) Despite hopes, the rally may become dangerous and peace unpredictable. A rumor circulated earlier this week that youths would burn down the stadium in retaliation for the alleged higher fee charged for ANPP's use of the facility than that recently charged for a similar PDP function. Rumors that the ANPP may display Harry's corpse at the rally could create a "volatile emotional situation" and provoke supporters to "go on the rampage," as a Halliburton security report recently noted. "The situation can also be hijacked by miscreants," they observe.

[4](#). (U) ANPP National Chairman Don Etiebet was quoted on March 5 as saying, "I want to call on all Nigerians to hold the PDP government and Chief Olusegun Obasanjo responsible for the gunning down of our members all over the country. If these intimidations and killings continue we have no option than to call on all Nigerians to defend themselves" (Reuters, "Nigeria opposition chief assassinated." 3/5/03).

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PORT HARCOURT ON EDGE  
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[5](#). (C) Human rights groups have reported that there is "very strong suspicion in Port Harcourt that the PDP has a hand in the killing." Chris Newsom of Friends of the Ogoni People recently said: "Marshall Harry's death is not a bolt from the blue. He had alerted the public of threats against his life for some time. The message people are taking from this is, 'This is just the beginning.' People are interpreting the act to be one of pure intimidation, as if to say, 'If we can take Harry down, nobody is safe.'" Multiple credible sources say armed thugs referred to as "Odili Boys" continue to harass political opponents of Governor Odili. Over the past several months, an increasing number of Southerners have been echoing Harry's accusation (septel) that the Rivers State

Government has been directly arming thugs to maintain the incumbent's support.

16. (C) Human rights activists and Rivers State government officials are concerned about their personal safety. "Confidence in Port Harcourt regarding the safety of political players of all shades is very, very, low," said Newsom. Rivers State Attorney General Aleruchi Cookey-Gam told poloff on March 7 that officials "have been advised to take proper caution, though the climate has been peaceful except for a few pockets. Overall, it has been better than could be expected. Police are on the alert and working hard to maintain peace." Azibaola Robert, president of the Niger Delta Human and Environmental Rescue Organization (ND-HERO) met with other human rights groups in Port Harcourt today (March 7) and will issue a statement calling for responsible parties to "eschew bitterness and violence." Ledum Mitee, president of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), will meet today (March 7) with Governor Odili. MOSOP and other groups also plan to air a radio statement appealing for public calm.

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INITIAL PROTESTS CALMED DOWN  
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17. (C) Official and NGO sources confirmed that the atmosphere is "pretty calm" now. On the night of March 5 or early morning of March 6, someone dynamited the private medical clinic of the Secretary to Rivers State Government Abiye Sekibo, but eye-witnesses say the property suffered minor damage. Press reports said one patient was injured and moved to a state hospital. Most targets have been "property, not people," said Newsom. "A few people have been roughed up. But no one has been killed, to my knowledge," he said.

18. (C) On March 5, an estimated five hundred protestors marched from Harry's Port Harcourt office through the streets toward the airport, carrying signs reading "Who killed Marshall Harry?" and "Why him, Marshall Harry?" As a precaution, Halliburton raised its security alert level to "high" within Port Harcourt, and reported that some "vehicles were burnt and people were brutalized. A Coca Cola truck was seized and the bottles used as weapons. Despite the presence of policemen on the airport road, some groups of rampaging youths are targeting and vandalizing any government vehicle in sight." Multiple sources confirm that "a couple" of vehicles were burned, including one federal government vehicle. Government vehicles are now absent from Port Harcourt streets. Rivers State House of Assembly Speaker Rotimi Amaechi described Port Harcourt on March 5 to poloff as "calm, but there are lots of rumors, tensions, and threats circulating." Lowering his voice, he added, "I am a member of PDP, but I don't like what is happening." Poloff was unable to get him to elaborate on this remark.  
HINSON-JONES